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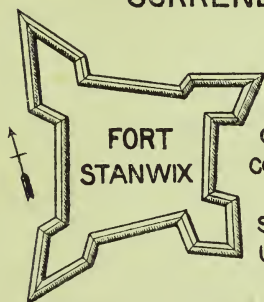
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FORT STANWIX AND OUR FLAG

BY
MARION EMMA TRACY

A·FORT·WHICH·NEVER
SURRENDERED



DEFENDED·AUGUST
1777·BY·COL·PETER
GANSEVOORT·&·LIEUT.
COL·MARINUS·WILLETT.
HERE·THE·STARS·&
STRIPES·WERE·FIRST
UNFURLED·IN·BATTLE.

ERECTED·1758.

This fort occupied a portion of
the block bounded by North James,
East Dominick, Spring and
Liberty Streets, Rome, N.Y.

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ROBERT BRUCE and MARION EMMA TRACY.



Rome Club House, Rome, N. Y., on the site of Fort Stanwix.
The Elm beside it was a sapling inside the Fort in 1777.

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FOREWORD



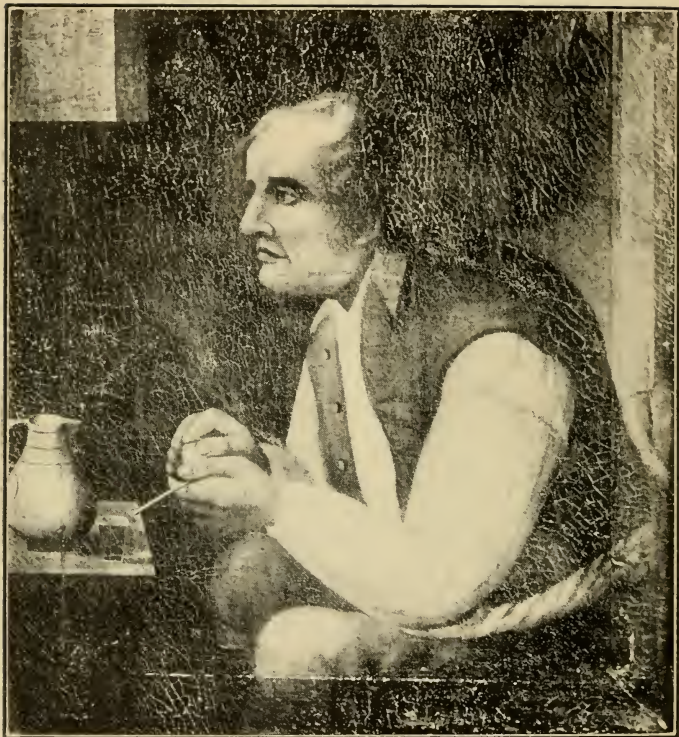
HIS story, vividly portraying the siege of Fort Stanwix, the first unfurling of the Stars and Stripes in battle, and the historic march of General Nicholas Herkimer, was originally intended as a magazine contribution. While well suited to such use, its ownership would afterwards have been vested elsewhere than in the district where it should be best known and most appreciated.

Hence the decision to publish it in this souvenir booklet form, with the hope that the people of Central New York, and particularly of Rome, may always cherish the memories which the portrayal was designed to perpetuate.

ROBERT BRUCE.

Clinton, Oneida Co., N. Y.,
April 15, 1914.

(Additional copies of this booklet can be had at 50 cents each, postpaid, from Marion Emma Tracy, 707 E. Dominick Street, Rome, N. Y.)



Photograph of General Nicholas Herkimer, copied from a portrait painted in oil, in possession of Oneida County Historical Society.

Fort Stanwix and Our Flag.

By MARION EMMA TRACY.

To be commissioned to a frontier fort which was in a deplorable state of disrepair, and the solitary sentinel in a vast wooded wilderness, savored more of hardships than of honors. But such was General Schuyler's order to Colonel Peter Gansevoort, and such was the condition of Fort Stanwix, New York, in April, 1777.

Fort Oswego, on Lake Ontario, away to the northwest, had long been abandoned, and Albany with its military reserves lay five days' march to the east. Between these extremes on the lonely, exposed portage separating Wood Creek and the Mohawk River, Colonel Gansevoort and his garrison of five hundred fifty men of the Third New York regiment, found themselves posted. His was the third detachment stationed here; still the fort, strategic and important as it was in guarding the Mohawk valley, was an insecure defense against an enemy mightier than the wild things of the woods.

Colonel Gansevoort's inventory showed inadequate rations, and the excessive heat rendering much of this unfit for consumption. Powder, also, was conspicuous in its scarcity, bullets did not fit the guns, and ammunition guaranteed but nine rounds per gun each day for a possible six weeks' tenancy. Besides these perplexing conditions, decay was everywhere. Parapets were broken, bastions wholly ineffective, and the moat about the fortification choked with debris, a weakened barrier to determined invasion. In addition, timbers nec-

essary for the work of reconstruction must be hewn by hand, while those wielding authority in military circles, familiar with the reports of previously withdrawn troops, had, thus far, been surprisingly slow in dispatching supplies and equipment to outlast an impending attack of the British.

Viewed in its entirety, the task appointed the young commander was a colossal one, and under a less magnetic, resourceful leader the issue might easily have been reversed.

The entire war situation was steadily growing more serious. Early in March, across the Atlantic, came the authentic report that Sir John Burgoyne had theoretically outlined a plan of attack which, unless baffled, would mean probably defeat to the struggling Continental army and the great cause of independence. Later, this being endorsed by the royal council, Sir Guy Carlton of Canada was instructed to provide troops, food, supplies and ammunition sufficient to carry the project to completion under Sir John and Colonel Barry St. Leger.

June brought a subsequent rumor that General Burgoyne had already started across northern wastes toward Lakes Champlain and George, intending by this route to tap the Hudson and thereby effect a junction with Howe's forces. Simultaneously, St. Leger, with six hundred British regulars, left Lachine, six miles from Montreal, to drift down the St. Lawrence to Ontario, through the Oswego River to Oneida Lake and thence by Wood Creek to the portage. Once in the Mohawk valley — God help those who had repudiated George III and his emissaries!

Another cause for anxiety developed also when Joseph Brant — a half-breed — disappeared and was said to be in league with St. Leger, commanding the Indians as allies, one thousand strong. Twenty dollars a scalp and

a quart of rum were the brazen, unqualified terms of reimbursement for the savages.

The lower Mohawk region through which Colonel Gansevoort and his men had come was a seething pot of strife. Allegiance to the Crown and the cry for freedom were the twin agencies which, barbed by individual decisions, conscientious or otherwise, were dividing families, leaving fathers and sons in opposing ranks, making enemies of brothers and turning the love of lifelong friendships to hate. Discontent was rife among the regular troops and the citizen soldiery had mutinied when ordered to the relief of Fort Stanwix.

Slowly Burgoyne was hewing his way south, and the forts to the north — Crown Point, Ticonderoga and Edward — were, one after another, compelled to surrender. Precious supplies at Whitehall had also been confiscated. Lacking troops, Schuyler could only temporarily retard his advance by felling trees across his path. Because of this, the prospective onslaught, with its reinforcement of British troops, caused much dismay, and members of the Continental Congress found solving the new nation's problems a hazardous and not altogether satisfactory undertaking.

The general longing for independence was quite as keen, but the fate of the new cause was just now jeopardized, and this uncertainty left all else subordinate to self-interests. The price of liberty was none too positively outlined to the wavering ones. King George's yoke had galled, but where were they to find a haven if his supremacy was re-established? This doubt led many deserters back to the ranks of royalty.

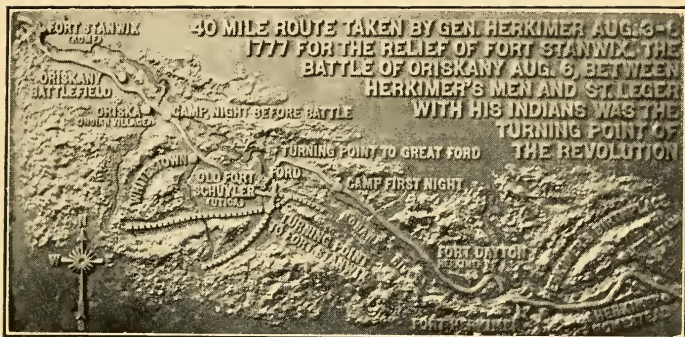
General Schuyler's position, due to this wave of indecision, was now a most trying one, and the gloom of that summer seemed but the spectral shadows of Valley Forge. Yet the success of the Revolution was the one theme of conversation, of dream, of prayer.

July had come with its enervating heat, and many of Colonel Gansevoort's men were on the sick list. The Indians, daily becoming more hostile, skulked about the fort in constantly increasing numbers with undisguised motive; raids from them were hourly anticipated. Indeed, to venture alone five hundred yards from the enclosure was to court disaster. Two young girls had been murdered, a third escaping with a bullet wound in one shoulder. Settlers about the fort were growing apprehensive, and the least intrepid among them braved capture and death in a hurried flight down the river.

Despite his limited resources, Colonel Gansevoort sent a detachment of one hundred fifty men to block the progress of the enemy when they should reach Wood Creek; thus fourteen days were spent. Concerted action must also be centered on making the fort impregnable, as the coming of the British was close at hand. St. Leger's troops had been met by Brant and his Indians at Oswego and the whole body thereafter shadowed by friendly Oneidas, who, from this time, kept Gansevoort informed of their location.

July was waning before the heartening information came to the fort that a number of batteaux, freighted with provisions and military supplies, were coming up from Schenectady under a guard two hundred strong, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel James Mellen of the Ninth Massachusetts regiment. With this knowledge, the future of the fort took on its first rose-tints since the advent of the garrison, and a company of one hundred men were sent out as a reception committee to welcome the newcomers. Spirits caught new inspiration, and the rapid ring of axes made merry echoes in the woods. Defying King George was not the irksome task it had been!

At five o'clock Saturday afternoon, August second, the relief party swung into the waters of the ox-bow curve



This profile of Gen. Herkimer's route was built up from maps of the Province of New York, made by English Geographers in 1767, 1775 and 1777. Mr. W. Pierrepont White, of Utica, gave much research to it, and was principally responsible for its present form. The map is absolutely to scale.

of the Mohawk where the river crept in closer to the fort. American hustle is the offspring of just such emergencies as this, and these welcome additions to the fort's depleted stock were presently housed with more haste than ceremony. And haste was imperative. An Indian runner had, at this juncture, come into camp, bringing the disconcerting news that the English were almost upon them. In fact, the final boat-load was hardly within the ramparts when the van of the advance guard, accompanied by many of the scalp-hungry savages under Brant, could be seen coming down the trail.

On this isolated amphitheater of the wilderness Fate had arranged the most dramatic setting of the Revolution, and sealed its opening scene with the capture of the captain of the relief boats, temporarily left behind! Quick work of a sagacious foe, indeed, and the incident flattered the inherent conceit of the invaders. It also fired the dogged persistence of the beleaguered Americans.

Night passed with no further demonstrations, and the day following broke fair and bright. Away to the west the trail was nominally clear and for a half-mile toward Wood Creek glimpses of red-coats were becoming more frequent. Faint echoes of martial music could now be heard and soldiers at the fort climbed the parapets to listen. The last of St. Leger's troops had arrived, and, impatient of restraint, the Colonel quickly formed them into line and gave command to march.

On they came with measured tread, confidently, determinedly, deploying until their lines spread out illimitably, and, to the spectators on the parapets, seemed an unnumbered host. The bright uniforms of the regulars with the gay trappings, and feathers fluttering in the head-gear of their allies, contributed a gorgeous dash of color to an otherwise somber setting of the picture.

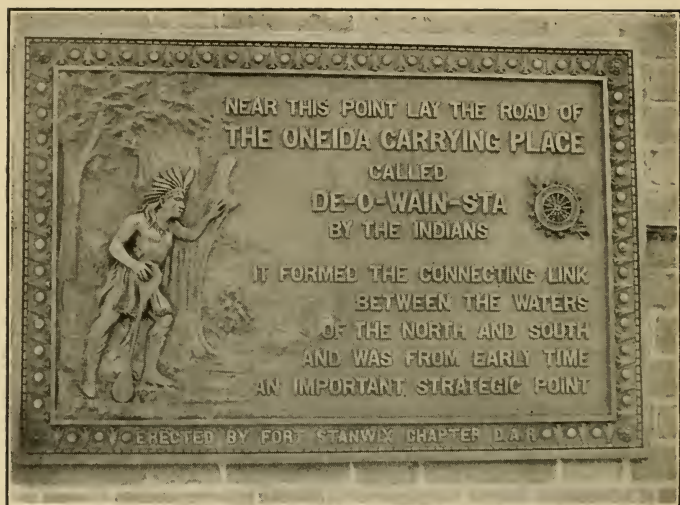
The garrison watched them in silence. Not a gun

was fired, no cry of defiance broke the Sabbath stillness, and the men slipped back to their places peculiarly elated. This was certainly no unworthy foe to defy, but yesterday's victory should be their last! The old fort should be held till either the enemy capitulated or not a live patriot remained inside to defend it!

St. Leger appeared at this time, the embodiment of English pomp and assurance, openly enthusiastic over the lack of American resistance thus far, arrogant and egotistically confident of ultimate success. Directing the erection of his headquarters at the summit of a slight eminence to the north of the fort, he took possession with all the assumption of a reigning monarch—as though it parodied the throne-room over-seas. Immediately he sent Colonel Gansevoort a formal demand to surrender, and with corresponding directness that officer's unconditional and scornful refusal was given back.

Notwithstanding the untiring effort of the men at the fort since early in June, the threatened crisis had stolen upon them while yet the parapets were incomplete and the magazine—a necessity wholly overlooked by the engineer until now—was not even begun. Under fire from the enemy, this was built and the parapets completed. Occasionally a patriot fell, but another took his place and the work went on at fearful cost. In return sharpshooters in the covert-way picked off men of the invading ranks and so, as the days came and went, the opening chapters of Fort Stanwix's glorious struggle were ineffaceably written.

As dawn broke over camp on the fourth of August the tactics of the British were further revealed when Indians began "pot-hunting" exposed soldiers from behind trees. The stars that night looked down upon a besieged garrison puzzling over this question: How was ignominious defeat to be eventually dealt out to the opposing hordes confronting them?



Bronze Tablet placed by the D. A. R. upon the Post Office, Rome, N. Y., located near the probable path across the Great Carrying Place, connecting Wood Creek with the Mohawk River, used by Traders and Indians.

With the coming of the British and their display of colors and music, a peculiar condition became apparent, not emphasized before; the old flag-staff, rising from the south-west bastion, was without an ensign and seemed orphaned! In June Congress had adopted a design, but that did not relieve the present incongruous situation. A flag must be had by some means! However, of the poetic conditions regarding the momentous development of this idol of liberty, history is disappointingly silent. Intent upon the sterner things of duty and necessity, it has left us to imagine the consternation at the fort, following the Indians' warning, the frantic rush of remaining settlers into the enclosure, the probable transfer of household treasure. Yet, withal, between the non-committal lines, facts render a tenable supposition easy.

It is not improbable, therefore, that that memorable Saturday night of the opening of the siege found women trying to preserve some semblance of home amid adverse surroundings; listening, perhaps, to the: "Now I lay me" of some wee tot tucked into an improvised bed; again, tossing a bone to some trapper's dog, hungry and neglected, and later, tiptoeing away to hospital quarters to relieve the needs of men whom heat and long hours had overcome. Women of those frontier days were inured to hardships and too accustomed to danger to be appalled by the present emergency. With characteristic resourcefulness they met this situation and thereby unwittingly stamped history with their individual seal.

Certainly the time was not propitious for a "thimble party," yet somewhere within the fort — possibly in the officers' headquarters — materials were assembled, deft fingers measured and joined while brave spirits sewed calmly on disregarding the thunder of cannon, the sharp popping of muskets, and a rain of bullets about the fort. As the precious emblem matured under their skillful touches a contagion of enthusiasm spread rapidly among

the soldiers. One group after another hurried in for a glimpse, and, with genuine ardor, proudly saluted the Stars and Stripes! And then — we do not know which of those initial days of the siege — an exultant garrison, wildly cheering, thrilled over the sight of their new pennant as it rose gaily up the weather-beaten old flagstaff, above the parapets and on, to where the breeze caught it, and for the first time, snapped it defiantly in the face of a foe. Against the blue, softened by distance, the crudeness of its manufacture was lost, and the literalness of a woman's red petticoat, a soldier's white shirt, and an army coat of blue, were transmuted into the romance of a new nation's birth and its Declaration of Independence. Mute companion of their stress and struggle, yet magnetic, inspiring, it waved above them, a subtle factor in keeping hearts stout and unyielding during the perplexing days which followed.

Closely allied with the flag incident were two days of intermittent firing with but little result and conditions practically unchanged. In the light of Colonel Gansevoort's contemptuous refusal to surrender and the further evidence of fearlessness among his men, the next manoeuvre of Colonel St. Leger's could not be considered seriously. The evening of the fifth, under cover of darkness, the Indians in full force circled their supposed victims and held an impromptu war-dance, far into the night, hideous with war-whoop and pent-up cruelty. As a specialty between acts its grim humor lent a spectacular feature to the carnage of war.

During this time stories from Indian runners had percolated through the valley and aroused among its people a much keener appreciation of the imperiled patriots at Fort Stanwix than heretofore; they also better comprehended what it might mean should the rabble-host, vengeance-mad, sweep down the river looting, burning, scalping, to salve the wounded British pride.

General Herkimer, with a spirit undismayed, loving the cause of American independence better than life itself, had at last electrified the countryside about Fort Dayton by his determined eloquence. Repeated protestations that, as men, they should cease halting between two opinions and with marshalled strength go to the rescue of the men at the fort, had met response. To guard family and home was not a duty to be delegated to national troops, but was now become the necessity of the hour—an individual task. The present exigency of the Mohawk valley must be met by its militia and its citizens. General Washington could not do their work for them. Vantage points along the Hudson must not be left imperfectly guarded to invite attack through withdrawal of troops.

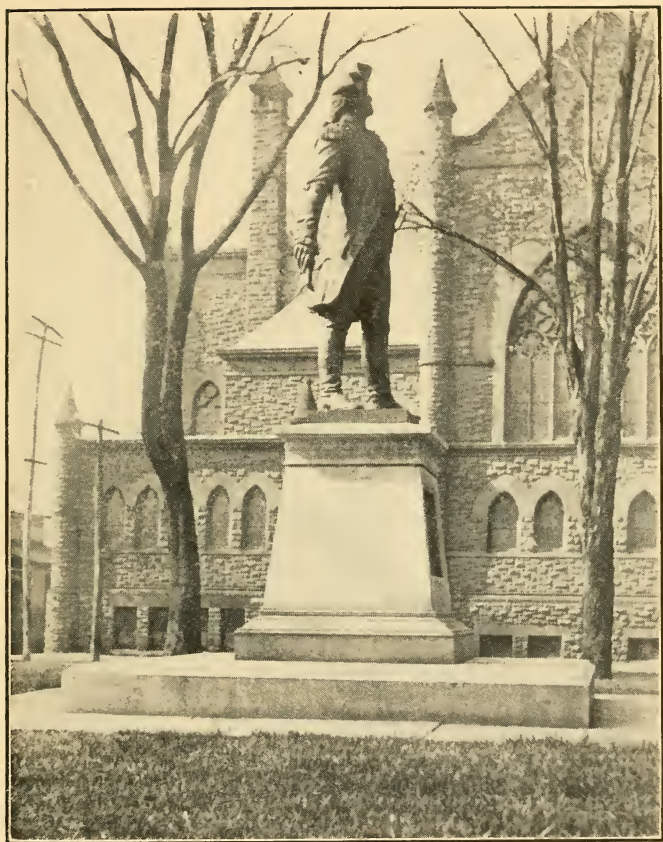
As a result, the afternoon of August third saw thirty-three companies of militia gathered at Fort Dayton. The homespun and linsey-woolsey of grangers, the buckskin of trappers and the Continental blue-and-buff of officers suggested the polls at a fall election. Styles of head-gear were as diversified as the faces beneath them, and weapons, obsolete and recent, glinted menacingly in the sun's rays. Neither could the babel of dialect resulting have been compassed by less than a half-dozen differing mother-tongues. But there they were Germans, Dutch, Irish, Scotch and French Huguenots, Englishmen proudly calling themselves Americans, and Yankees from New England, undisciplined, garrulous, insubordinate as a flock of sheep—a possible thousand of peace-loving men—eager now to be off and away on the march toward the enemy.

That evening General Herkimer summoned to a war-council on the heights of Fort Dayton many whose names are listed among the hero-martyrs of that eventful struggle. Colonels Ebenezer Cox, Peter Bellinger, Jacob Klock and Frederick Visseher were in command of troops.

There were Isaac Paris in citizen's dress, a member of the State Senate; Thomas Spencer, a Seneca half-breed, an advocate of the cause, and Skenandoah, chief of the Oneidas, whom Dominic Kirkland had influenced in behalf of the oppressed. The big chief had come to offer the assistance of his warriors in this work of rescue and defense, which service General Herkimer graciously accepted. Couriers were soon sent to appraise Colonel Gansevoort of relief en route, and the trip west was begun the day following — August fourth. News of the arrival of the British at Fort Stanwix having been brought by an Indian runner intensified the necessity, as well as the willingness of the men, for forced marching.

The night of the fifth found this craftsman's-army encamped near Oriskany — a village of the Oneidas — and from this point Adam Helmer, with two other scouts, stole away along the south side of the river to burrow through dangers besetting them and arrange with Colonel Gansevoort for a combined attack upon the British. Signals had been agreed upon, and thus the camp fell asleep, a hush of expectancy brooding over them, the fortunes of the morrow yet to be revealed.

Championing the cause her brother had espoused, Molly Brant, in the household of Sir William Johnson, greedily spied among her patriot neighbors and reported all that her woman's wit and savage instinct told her was desirable information for the enemy. So with the marching away of General Herkimer's men, this wily Tory in petticoats also despatched an agile scout, who was to observe the movements of the army from ambush, and, at the crucial moment, dash on to the camp of St. Leger. Having stalked the expedition till its final bivouac he, too, stealthily disappeared, still keeping to the north of the river. Thus, with its waters between them, and night shielding their action, the scouts of opposing forces were seeking to accomplish similar ends.



The Gansevoort Statue, East Park, Rome, N. Y.

Early on the morning of the sixth the British were seen manoeuvring to the east of Fort Stanwix, but the movement did not then seem especially significant. At ten o'clock, however, Adam Helmer and his aides reached the fort, having gone far to the south to avoid the enemy's sentries, and fears quickly arose that St. Leger might also have been informed of Herkimer's coming and had, therefore, withdrawn certain of his troops to intercept reinforcements.

The signal of three cannon shots immediately boomed out their message of co-operation to the waiting men at Oriskany. All was now excitement at the fort. Messengers hurried here and there across the parade ground: officers were shouting orders, and soldiers testing their rifles, gathered in groups as hasty preparations for a flank movement were being made.

At the same time over the bog-covered trail, with its treacherous stretches of corduroy road, winding through a gulch and out upon the slimy bottom-lands of the Mohawk, a fateful struggle was being waged. General Herkimer's men, restive under delay, doubting the need or advisability of longer waiting for Helmer's signals, had about nine o'clock, after much controversy, overborne the General's caution and marched without a reconnoitering guard into an ambushade of the enemy. The rank underbrush had suddenly become the leafy embrasures of hostile muskets, and arrows hissed vindicatively as they cut the air, while tomahawks shone, blood-splattered, in the sunlight.

The attack was paralyzing in its suddenness. Prerogatives of rank were ignored and every man defended himself desperately; then, after the first benumbing shock had passed, troops reassembled and fought as coolly as their more experienced antagonists. Over all at this point, the excessive heat of the preceding days culminated in a terrific storm, so marked that the frenzy of nature

abashed even St. Leger's spirit and hostilities were abandoned for a time.

Preparations at the fort were now complete, and with the lessening of the storm two hundred men under Colonel Marinus Willett passed out the sally-port on double-quick, followed by fifty others in charge of a fieldpiece mounted on a gun-carriage. Marching straight for the enemy in plain view, they drove in their sentries and fell with such rapid, decisive fire upon the advance guard of Sir John Johnson's two commands as to leave no choice but that of flight to those in camp. Sir John, with coat off, overtaken in his incautious assurance of security, ingloriously took to his heels, as did his allies. The rout of the enemy was complete, and the exhilaration of the men boundless.

Colonel Willett remained on the enemy's ground until twenty-one wagon-loads of camp equipment had been transferred to the fort, then, leaving some dead for burial, he fought his way back to headquarters, dispersing the enemy in a half-formed ambuscade of rallied forces that added greatly to the royal losses. Blankets and brass kettles, muskets and ammunition, tomahawks, spears, with tents and commissary stores, were the ordinary returns of their venture. Sir John's personal baggage, diary and memoranda added another trophy. But the most precious of all, not excepting four prisoners captured, were five British flags, which, upon the return of the men to the fort, they hoisted beneath the Stars and Stripes amid such cheers as the wilderness had never before echoed. And there they floated, a constant taunt of American prowess, until the siege was over.

Evidence was found in Sir John's papers that orders from General Schuyler had at some time been intercepted while the messenger no doubt met death. A letter to Colonel Willett was also disclosed, and rarest of all,



Sixth Marker, located two miles to the east of Deerfield Corners on the State Road from Trenton to Herkimer, near Staring Creek.

one for Colonel Gansevoort from his sweetheart in Albany. What a pitying providence that released Cupid, mourning over his captivity in this wilderness camp! Sir John had so far respected the privacy of these mis-sives as to leave them unopened, and who shall say how much of new hope and courage resulted from their mysterious preservation and delivery?

St. Leger had effectually delayed reinforcements, and confidently fancied that the disappointed garrison would now be willing to consider terms of surrender. The awful toll of death following the battle of the morning, prisoners taken and the hopelessness he anticipated would paralyze the besieged garrison, touched his own future with kaleidoscopic changes. Such masterly frustration of an opponent's plans merited much from King George. It was but a matter of time ere the triumphal return of himself and Sir John Burgoyne should emblazon the annals of history and the mother-country confer requisite honors! However, a new conception of Yankee spunk and no small chagrin dampened his ardor when knowledge of Sir John's entire rout forced a readjustment of logic. That Willett should not lose a man, while his own losses were heavy, was another humiliating item; and the confiscating of his favorite officer's personal effects was a most undignified entry to figure in royal history.

Besides, there were plans of campaigns and information of the Crown which, unfortunately, were now in the hands of the foe. Fort Stanwix, with all it held of value to his cause, must be taken! St. Leger, no doubt, considered it but small equivalent for his ill-timed episode. The disaffection of the Indians over the morning's devastation of their own ranks and the death of several chiefs, also added another anxiety to the Colonel's score. How to placate their anger was a new task at hand.

In camp the succeeding day, after a night's consideration of the situation, St. Leger again dictated a message to Colonel Gansevoort continuing his policy of bullying, seeking to force an issue by intimidation, letting imagination urge the advisability of kneeling to, rather than resisting resistless foes. Under a white flag Colonel Butler and two companions carried it to the fort. Being first blindfolded outside the gate they were admitted and taken to the officers' mess-room, where windows had been darkened and candles lighted. It was the Colonel's pleasure on this occasion to surround himself with his aides, irrespective of grade. At one end of a long table sat the three visitors, and opposite were Colonels Gansevoort, Mellen and Willett as hosts.

Between them on either side, others, who could not be accommodated with chairs, were content to stand. Wine was passed, followed by crackers and cheese, and after these preliminaries were over Major Ancrom, with condescending pomposity of manner, arose and delivered his commandant's message, garbed in such convincing sophistries as was intended to make surrender seem a veritable Jew's bargain to these imperiled men at the fort who were fighting, according to the Major, for a lost cause! The Indians were much incensed over their loss of the day previous, he told them, and St. Leger could not guarantee immunity from their vengeful natures except under guard as prisoners of war! Refusing his terms they were carving their own destinies. It was the velvety paw of the British lion with the claws veiled!

Colonel Willett was deputized to answer for Colonel Gansevoort, and his pointed remarks and their brevity pleased all but three of the company. He first assured the Major that none of his listeners were deceived by the superfluities of his long speech. Then he flung back the taunt that General Herkimer's defeat did not render their cause hopeless. Besides this, Burgoyne had not

reached Albany — that was false! As Americans they were here to defend the new flag above them and should do it at any hazard! Furthermore, he need never expect to see the inside of this fort again unless he came as a captive. If Colonel St. Leger was so weak a commander as to be unable to control his troops, allies or otherwise, the blood they spilled must be chargeable to himself and none other.

“I consider your message,” concluded Colonel Willett, “a degrading one for a British officer to send and one by no means reputable for a British officer to carry,” and, when the echoes of applause had died away, the incident was closed.

St. Leger was baffled a second time. Doctor Woodruff, of the fort, and the British surgeon — one of those under the white flag — visited the wounded prisoners, a three days’ armistice was proposed and agreed upon, then the men were again blindfolded and led out beyond the gate as they had come. The armistice saved garrison ammunition and gave the invaders opportunity to consider their chances of failure.

Meanwhile, inside the fort, ways and means were being duly considered; the question of outside relief was paramount, and must be accomplished at no very remote day. To this end, therefore, on the tenth of August, when night had settled down in all its blackness over the forest, Colonel Willett and Lieutenant Stockwell passed unseen out of the sally-port, crept cautiously over the marshes — sometimes upon hands and knees — down toward the river. Indians were everywhere and the slightest mischance would bring the enemy upon them with a rush. The undertaking was one which only sternest necessity countenanced.

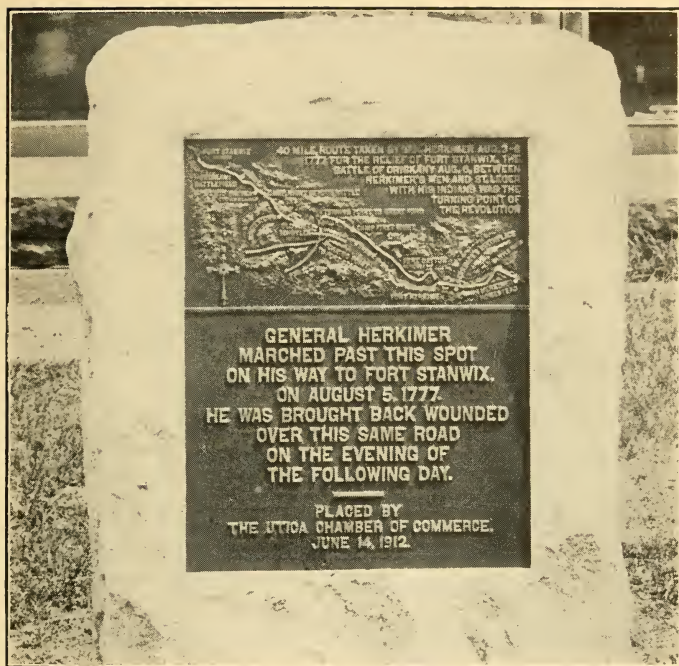
Overhead was the cloudless sky with the stars faintly reflected in the waters of the Mohawk. A log reaching far beyond mid-stream afforded an easy crossing, but

their figures, silhouetted against the open, would furnish easy mark for the sentry's fire. They listened moments. Crouching stealthily, like the denizens of the wood, they ventured slowly. The soft lapping of the ripples against the bank sounded all too like the moccasined feet they dreaded, but the farther end was reached in safety and Lietutenant Stockwell, familiar with wilderness travel, took the lead.

Midnight was not yet past when the sudden barking of a dog, perilously near, startled them. Fearing betrayal by snapping twigs or crunching leaves they stopped, not daring to lift a foot, every sense preternaturally alert to danger, and listened again. However, as moments passed and no commotion followed the dog's alarm their fears quieted. At length they stole on a few steps to the protecting shadows of underbrush nearby, and there spent the final hours of the night.

Having left the fort without blankets, so as to be as unenumerated as possible, and with only crackers and cheese in their pockets, their position now was not one of comfort. When the first gray heralds of dawn filtered through the green canopy above them they crept away until the river was reached and, now, on its banks, again fording its shallow depths to render impossible any discovery of their trail, they made a long detour to the north, being less liable to a surprise from the Indians; then turning a few miles to the east led them probably through the present townships of Steuben and Trenton, and from this point south, three o'clock of the second day found them at Little Falls on the Mohawk river, having traveled in this time some fifty miles.

Affairs at Fort Stanwix, after the departure of Willett and Stockwell, had changed, and, following the armistice, became more critical. St. Leger had sent a third demand to surrender and again been refused. Tunneling was, in consequence, resorted to as a last measure, a successful



Tenth Marker, located on Whitesboro Street, Utica, N. Y., not
far from Genesee Street, in grass plot in front of the
"Saturday Globe" building.

method in some instances of undermining forts, but fortunately not in this. When within one hundred fifty feet of the ramparts firing from the covert-way defeated this plan also.

St. Leger evidently underestimated the persistent courage of the Americans, else he would not have reasoned that repeated demands and reiterated threats might prevail. He had no conception of the hold this love of freedom had upon these oppressed, overtaxed subjects of King George. That this old fort held men as determined as himself, as capable in thought and action, and as devoted to their cause, he would not acknowledge, even though they had baffled every advance of his so successfully as to merit admiration from a less bigoted foe. Those bullets from the covert-way were, at this time, convincing argument unheeded. The element of fear on which he had so much depended to win him honors, had proven a false hope.

Behind a veneering of outward calm, misgivings as to the ultimate outcome of the siege were now troubling alike officers and men within the ramparts. A week had passed since Willett and Stockwell left, with no word, no way of knowing if their daring had left them lifeless in the forest or led them on to success. But that a crisis was impending none could deny.

Down at Fort Dayton — now Herkimer — the welcome to these men upon their arrival had been most enthusiastic. Here it was learned that General Schuyler had ordered the First New York regiment and a detachment of Massachusetts troops under General Larnard, the whole commanded by General Benedict Arnold, to march to the relief of Fort Stanwix. These troops, not many days later, were assembled, awaiting final arrangements.

Among the several prisoners confined at Fort Dayton, recently captured as spies and sentenced to death, was one Han Yost Schuyler, a half-witted lad, disliking prison

restrictions and gladly promising all sorts of fidelity to General Arnold for even a conditional reprieve. With a brother held as hostage, he marched away with the relief party, a traitorous loyalist. While yet some distance from Fort Stanwix, hatless and barefoot, his ragged trousers and hands briar-torn, his coat purposely punctured by bullets, he was released by General Arnold and darted off on his mission. Shortly thereafter he rushed into the camp of St. Leger breathless, seemingly exhausted, acting perfectly the part of a refugee, shouting incoherent warnings of a large American force down the valley. St. Leger questioned, deliberated, counseled, then questioned again. Plans for an ambush were considered and persistently cried down.

“They are coming! They are coming!” shouted the boy in apparent terror. How many? A dirty, unkempt finger pointed to the leaves above and conveyed the false impression of a host approaching. Han Yost was known to Sir John Johnson as a Tory and thus they fell the easier victims of Arnold’s ruse. The Indians, being superstitious, believed insane, or half-witted persons to be in league with the spirits, and this, coupled with English rum, made them fleet-footed cowards. There was no restraining them and alone St. Leger knew himself unequal to the task of maintaining the siege against such odds. Once the invaders scented danger, consternation lent them wings and stole discretion. The whole force fled precipitately, willing in their haste to breast the dangers and inconvenience of existence in this desert of trees without waiting to pack camp equipment or stores, glad of an unobstructed path back to Wood Creek. This ruse of Arnold’s saved all the horrors of an engagement, inevitable otherwise, deadly enough between regulars and doubly so with savage allies.

The flag above the captured colors was still flying victoriously when Arnold’s men arrived, while the cause



Academy of Holy Names, on the site where St. Leger had his
Headquarters during the siege of Fort Stanwix.

of independence had gained immeasurably with the retreat of the foe. That nine hundred of them, following for days, failed to overtake the fugitives, testified to the celerity of the latter's movements.

Han Yost had done his work well, and his account of the British flight kindled fresh fires of patriotism in the Mohawk Valley, while Burgoyne's defeat at Saratoga fed the flames. Fort Stanwix had not surrendered; its new flag had not been furled. The future of the United States was a thing assured!

With the onrush of years after peace was declared, the shadows of the forest were pressed farther and farther west and settlers established homes on sunlit acres. Around Fort Stanwix cabins were again built up, and, under the stimulus of peace and trade, the strategic points which characterized it as a place of defence were now the influences that mothered the portage settlement and developed it gradually into the nucleus of a town. As a lineal descendant of those strenuous, decisive days, Rome inherits with just pride her legacy of historic treasure, and as heir to the site of Fort Stanwix guards the trust with due respect to the responsibility.

Few heroes are as aptly honored upon the scene of their greatest conflict as Colonel Gansevoort, and few, indeed, the places where the tides of time have brought changes more poetic and forceful in their strong comparisons.

With the trails of the portage widened into city streets and the footprints of St. Leger's men hidden under miles of asphalt and brick, the din of traffic seems to crowd into the realm of dreams the Council of Peace which convened at the fort eleven years after Gansevoort's victories. But, pausing between James and Spring streets, with a thought of those memorable yesterdays, can you fancy Governor Clinton and Count Monsbiers, the French ambassador, leaving the river down near the East Domi-

nick street bridge and coming, in the mellow October sunlight, over what was then a marshy path, to the fort? Gracing the occasion were cocked hats, powdered wigs and genteel uniforms, while the Marchioness de Biron — the Count's sister — accompanying them was an important figure.

Colonel Gansevoort was also one of the company, and William Floyd, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, of whose wrist-laces and ruffled short-fronts and satin waistcoats not even a great treaty of peace could render either entirely forgetful. There were Cornplanter, and Skenandoah, Red Jacket and Brant, with their heavy faces and glowering brows, wearing their longest feathers and gaudiest insignia of rank, while some four thousand braves overflowed the fort.

And can you see the assemblage with bowed heads as Dominic Kirkland, arms uplifted and face turned heavenward, invokes blessing and benediction? Does this scene seem to neighbor with the rush of trolley-car, motorcycle and automobile, the ring of hoof-beats and the passing of thousands around Rome's "busy corner?"

Then again, like kings who have abdicated in favor of mightier forces, four silent cannon, figure-heads of their effective predecessors, mark the place of each bastion, and back of them are homes. At this point, in the reception room of Rome Club House, the remodeled Colonial residence of the late George Barnard, hangs the life-size portrait of Colonel Gansevoort, the work of a famous artist, and the gift to the club from his granddaughter, Mrs. Abraham Lansing of Albany. And here it is one fancies a reminiscent light steals into the kindly eyes, where now as spectator, he contrasts the banquetting at Rome's social functions with that earlier banquet of crackers and cheese when he was host.

Outside, like the fulfilled prophecy of that first crude flag, another dips gracefully in the breeze and epitomizes

peace. And over the man the flag and the memories the long arms of a giant elm cast protecting shadows, a patriarch of the primeval forest, an eye-witness to the changes of one hundred thirty-seven years. Washington and Lafayette have stood beneath its branches, and Governors Hughes and Dix have paid homage to it.

On the height where St. Leger had his headquarters stands the old St. Peter's church, with its Academy of Holy Names, while Sir John Johnson's camp is crossed by the New York Central railroad near the eastern approach to its river bridge.

Over in the quiet of East park, custodian of the portage still, stands the bronze statue of Colonel Gansevoort, also the gift to the city of the generous Mrs. Lansing. And beyond the "questing and the guessing" of this life, we hope, sometime, to meet the much loved, undaunted defender of our cherished Fort Stanwix, and greet the Unknown Ones who gave us our first flag.





One of the four cannon which mark the bastions of Fort Stanwix,
Rome, N. Y.

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